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ABSTRACT

This report presents an evaluation of the Asian-American Communications (A-AC) In-School Staff and Parent Workshops program in New York City public schools for the 1988-89 school year. A-AC provided workshops on Asian cultures for schools with large Asian populations and acted as a resource center by offering support services to interested schools. The following major program objectives are discussed in this report: (1) to conduct a field survey in each school to gather information on specific problems and needs regarding Asian American students; (2) to conduct a 15- to 30-minute presentation and discussion based on needs identified by the field survey for 40 to 200 personnel at 30 schools; and (3) to provide follow-up activities based on the information gathered at the workshop and to provide crisis intervention, mediation, parent networking, and translation services upon request. Evaluation methodology is briefly discussed. The evaluation indicates that all of the program's primary objectives were met, except for attendance. There was no available data to assess the attendance objective of the 40 to 200 participants per school. Most workshop participants rated the sessions well-organized, but indicated that the opportunity for question-and-answer interaction was sometimes limited. Participants gave high ratings to the workshops in terms of their usefulness and information. Recommendations for improving this program are discussed. (JS)

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OREA Report

EVALUATION SECTION REPORT

ASIAN-AMERICAN COMMUNICATIONS IN-SCHOOL STAFF AND PARENT WORKSHOPS 1988-89

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EVALUATION SECTION
John E. Schoener, Chief Administrator
February 1990

EVALUATION SECTION REPORT

ASIAN-AMERICAN COMMUNICATIONS IN-SCHOOL STAFF AND PARENT WORKSHOPS 1988-89

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ASIAN-AMERICAN COMMUNICATIONS
IN-SCHOOL STAFF AND PARENT WORKSHOPS
(A-AC)
1988-89

SUMMARY

- The Asian-American Communications program was fully implemented. During the 1988-1989 school year, school personnel were presented with on-site workshops on Asian cultures. In addition, the program provided related supportive services upon request.

- The program met its primary objectives of conducting a pre-workshop assessment, presenting a positively evaluated 15- to 30-minute workshop in 30 schools, and providing follow-up and related services upon request. The program did not provide the Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment with the data necessary to assess the attendance objective of 40-200 participants per school.

The Asian-American Communications In-School Staff and Parent Workshops (A-AC) program sought to convey information about Asian cultures to enhance understanding and sensitivity of teachers and other school personnel. It also sought to serve as a resource to mediate specific problems of Asian-American students. The program conducted workshops in 30 schools, provided follow-up services upoon request as well as support services to an estimated 25 families.

A-AC conducted a field survey at each school to gather information on the school's needs. The program then presented a 15- to 30-minute workshop targeting these needs. A question-and-answer period followed. Upon request, A-AC returned for additional staff development activities and/or related support services for specific needs (e.g., crisis intervention, networking, and translation).

The Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment (OREA) used data collected by A-AC to evaluate the workshops. In addition, OREA interviewed twelve principals and other school representatives as well as the project director. Respondents verified that the program had met the objective of a comprehensive field survey and had targeted the workshop to each school's needs. Most workshop participants rated the sessions well-organized, but indicated that the opportunity for question-and-answer interaction was sometimes limited. Participants gave high ratings to the workshops in terms of their usefulness and information. The program met its follow-up service objective by providing further staff development and related services in several schools. Respondents at those schools rated the services very favorably.

As this was the first year of funding for the Asian-American Communications program, no comparisons with prior performance can be made. Overall, the program appears to have met a need for a source of information about Asian cultures and as a resource for assistance with specific problems.

While participants' comments were generally favorable, some did raise a few criticisms, most frequently about the insufficient amount of time for open discussion. Participants also expressed a desire for more information on specific strategies for classroom application. Some participants complained of difficulties understanding speakers who spoke too softly or had accents.

The conclusions, based on the findings of this evaluation, lead to the following recommendations:

- Clearly define time requirements with principals so that other school business does not intrude on workshop time.
- If funds permit, add staff to provide more workshops with fewer participants so that sufficient time is available for discussion.
- A-AC's speakers should insure that they are clearly understood.
- Investigate extending A-AC's role as a networking resource.

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I. INTRODUCTION

This report presents the Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment's (OREA's) evaluation of the Asian-American Communications (A-AC) In-School Staff and Parent Workshops program for the 1988-1989 school year. The program was in its first year of funding by the Board of Education, Division of Funded Programs. A-AC provided workshops on Asian cultures for schools with large Asian populations and acted as a resource center by offering support services to interested schools. The major program objectives were:

1) To conduct a field survey in each school to gather information on specific problems and needs vis-a-vis Asian students.

2) To conduct a 15- to 30-minute presentation and discussion based on needs identified by the field survey for 40-200 personnel at 30 schools.

3) To provide follow-up activities (i.e., conferences, staff development, consultation, etc.) based on the information gathered at the workshop and to provide crisis intervention, mediation, parent networking, and translation services upon request.

HISTORY OF PROGRAM

Asian-American Communications was established in October 1985, at which time it offered annual seminars to school officials. After participants suggested the inclusion of teachers, A-AC initiated workshops in schools in the fall of

1986. In 1987-1988, A-AC presented workshops in ten schools at the elementary through high school levels. With Board of Education funding, the program was extended to include pre-workshop field assessments in the 1988-1989 school year.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

A-AC provided services citywide to all interested schools with a significant population of Asian students. Workshop participants included all levels of school personnel--teachers, paraprofessionals, counselors, and administrators.
Upon request of the school, A-AC also provided translation, mediation, referral, and other direct services to students and their families.

STAFF

A-AC staffing consisted of a director and a part-time administrative assistant. A-AC contracted with training consultants on an as-needed basis to provide expertise in relevant Asian cultures. The project trained graduate students from Teachers College and Columbia University to conduct the workshops. A-AC also used consultants for translation and other specific service needs.

DELIVERY OF SERVICES

Asian-American Communications initiated contact with schools through a letter offering a workshop and follow-up services. Schools were requested to complete a survey form designed to gather information on student and faculty characteristics and the

school's specific needs. A-AC staff visited each school, observing classes and other activities as well as talking with students and teachers. The subsequent workshops, generally conducted at a faculty conference, focused on the needs identified by the field survey. A-AC staff also conveyed information about Asian cultures in order to help overcome stereotypes and develop a foundation for enhancing the school experience of Asian students. When time allowed, a portion of the workshop was devoted to open discussion. A-AC provided follow-up services at the request of the school.

REPORT FORMAT

This report is organized in the following sections: Chapter II describes the evaluation methodology Chapter III presents the qualitative and quantitative findings of the evaluation effort and Chapter IV offers conclusions and recommendations based upon the results of the evaluation.

II. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The evaluation assessed two major areas: program implementation and outcomes. Questions included the following:

Process/Implementation

- Was a field survey conducted at each school prior to the workshop?
- Were students and faculty interviewed and classes observed during the field survey?

  Was the information gathered in the field survey used to tailor workshops to individual schools?
- Were workshops presented in an organized manner?
- Did workshops provide the opportunity for open discussion and questions?
- Were follow-up services provided where requested?

Outcome

- Did workshop participants consider the information imparted to be useful and appropriate?
- Did schools evaluate follow-up services in a favorable manner?

EVALUATION PROCEDURES

A-AC staff designed and administered an evaluation instrument for workshop participants. Since the forms were completed voluntarily, not all participants chose to respond. Therefore, a potential self-selection bias exists: participants who were especially positive or negative may have been more

likely to complete the form. OREA received a total of 926 forms from 28 schools (one school's forms were missing, and one workshop was completed too late to be included in the evaluation).

A-AC used two versions of the evaluation form, the first in six schools during September (N=285), and the second in the remaining sessions (N=641). The evaluation form collected basic demographic data, ratings of the workshop on four dimensions, and participants' comments on areas perceived as requiring follow-up and additional information. In order to analyze factors affecting participants' ratings of the workshop, the separate rating items were combined to form a single satisfaction score for each person. Due to differences in the two versions of the form, some items were not comparable across the entire sample.

OREA staff conducted phone interviews with principals, workshop participants from 12 of the 30 schools (seven elementary, three junior high, and two high schools), and the director of A-AC For these interviews, OREA selected a cross-section of schoo. types and times of the year in which the program workshop was presented. These qualitative data supplemented the quantitative data from the evaluation form and were especially useful in determining the nature and extent of pre-workshop assessment and follow-up activity.

III. EVALUATION FINDINGS

The Asian-American Communications in-school staff and parent workshop project proposed objectives in staff development and follow-up services.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

The program objectives for staff development were:

- To conduct a pre-workshop assessment at each of the 30 participating schools.
- To provide a 15- to 30-minute workshop with question-and-answer period for 40-200 faculty in each school.

The twelve respondents surveyed by OREA indicated that A-AC conducted a thorough pre-workshop information-gathering effort consisting of a school survey form and a visit to observe and meet with students and staff. In most instances, A-AC's on-site visit was reported as lasting a full day and in one case as spread over "a few days." Only one respondent reported less extensive activity, estimating that the A-AC assessment took about three hours. A-AC information-gathering included formal activities such as observation of classes and informal meetings with students in the lunchroom, at break times, etcetera. All respondents reported that the information collected in the assessment was used to tailor the subsequent workshop to the school's needs.

A-AC conducted at least one workshop, generally for about 30 minutes, at each of the 30 schools. This met the contracted requirement, but there were criticisms that the workshops were

too brief. Some participants, as well as A-AC's director, also felt there had been inadequate opportunity for open discussion. Time constraints derived from union requirements governing faculty conferences. Often, other school business intruded upon time allotted for the workshop. The problem was partially overcome through informal discussions that continued after the workshop.

The project did not provide OREA with specific data on workshop attendance. The number of evaluation forms submitted per workshop is not a reliable measure of attendance but did indicate that the majority of workshops exceeded the minimum target of 40 participants.

Participants were very positive in their ratings and comments about the presentation. When asked to rate how well the workshop was organized, almost two-thirds of participants responded "very good" or "excellent," while less than three percent answered "below average."

School principals and participants reported that the workshop focused on their concerns and that the speaker was well prepared and dynamic. One criticism, voiced by several, was the difficulty in understanding speakers because of accents and, in the case of one training consultant, too soft a speaking voice. Another negative comment was that the workshops did not teach specific strategies with practical applications. As one participant stated, "[We were] not really informed on how to deal with [the] issues discussed." Another expressed a desire that

"the speaker return with specific information to help us better educate our students."

Statistical analyses revealed that both type of school and size of workshop were related to level of satisfaction. Participants at junior high schools displayed the highest level of satisfaction; elementary school participants were next; and those at high schools were the least satisfied ($F=5.14$, $p < .05$). Those involved in smaller workshops registered a higher degree of overall satisfaction than those at larger ones ($F=33.91$, $p <.05$). While the latter finding is consistent with previous research, the reason for differences between types of schools is less apparent--it is not due to size of the workshops. It is possible that high school staff had more specific needs than the workshop could address.

Other variables were only marginally related to level of satisfaction. Those with more years of experience and higher levels of education had higher levels of satisfaction, but the differences were small and not statistically significant. Those in counseling and administrative positions reported greater satisfaction than teachers, but there were relatively few participants in these non-teaching positions. Finally, the time of year when the workshop took place did not affect satisfaction.

Based on data gathered from principals and other participants, A-AC fulfilled its objective of conducting pre-workshop assessments to compile information for planning workshops.

A-AC also attained the objective of providing 15- to 30-minute workshops in 30 schools.

FOLLOW-UP SERVICES

- The program objective for follow-up services was to provide follow-up workshops and related services upon request.

A-AC provided follow-up workshops, presentations, and related support services when requested. Of the twelve schools contacted by OREA, two reported having follow-up meetings. A-AC returned twice to one of these, a high school, made a presentation to the assistant principals, and attended two departmental meetings to answer specific questions. The respondent from this school stated that the follow-up workshops were "very well received." The other, an elementary school, reported that A-AC had conducted two lunchtime follow-up workshops. Of the remaining ten schools, five mentioned that they were interested in having A-AC return for follow-up in the fall. One principal cited the five-per-year limit on faculty conferences as an obstacle to A-AC's return.

Three of the twelve schools reported using A-AC's other follow-up services. Two were high schools that used A-AC as a networking resource (e.g., for recommendations when seeking bilingual professionals). They also called on A-AC for translation, crisis intervention, and mediation services. For example, A-AC helped a youngster with home problems by speaking with the parents, who were unaware of the problem, and making referrals for the family to obtain assistance. One elementary

school that used A-AC for referrals informed district office personnel that they found A-AC a valuable resource.

The director of A-AC reported extensive involvement with one elementary school. She said that she was frequently asked to make phone calls to non-English speaking parents about problems at the school. Overall, she estimated that A-AC was involved with 10 Korean and 15 Chinese families during the year. These interventions ranged from relaying information to intensive involvement, as when A-AC assisted in hospitalizing a mother in need of psychiatric care. A-AC's director reported that staffing limitations presented an obstacle to providing additional services of this nature. She felt that a full-time administrative assistant and a full-time Korean consultant were needed to improve delivery of services.

All services requested by schools appear to have been provided. Of the nine schools reporting no utilization of A-AC services, four said they were able to handle problems in-house, three considered using the project's services but did not, and two reported being unaware of their availability.

The two high schools and one elementary school utilizing A-AC's follow-up services were very positive about their experience. The high schools viewed A-AC as a valuable resource. They described A-AC's assistance as "marvelous" and "helpful," and A-AC staff as "very eager." The principal of the elementary school using A-AC services felt strongly enough to contact his local state representative about obtaining funding for A-AC.

A-AC reported initiating monthly workshops for parents in two elementary schools. A-AC planned to continue these follow-up workshops during the 1989-90 school year.

A-AC attained its objective for providing follow-up services.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A-AC successfully met its primary objectives for the 1988-1989 year. Some workshop participants expressed concern over limited opportunities for open discussion and a lack of information on specific strategies for classroom adoption. Restrictions imposed by union requirements governing faculty conferences, the large size of some workshops, and use of time for other business were to blame for these time constraints.

A-AC planned to return to the same schools the following year to present practical suggestions for classroom application. An increase in staffing, if feasible, would allow A-AC to target smaller groups and thus better meet specific needs. Such sessions might be scheduled during lunch hours and offered on a voluntary basis to interested personnel. Also, time problems might be lessened if A-AC were to delineate time requirements more clearly with principals. A-AC speakers should also be trained in speaking techniques, including audibility.

The support services offered by A-AC were important to the limited number of schools the program could serve. Increased activity in this area would probably require additional staff. Possibly A-AC could serve as a networking resource, as it has in some instances, rather than providing time-consuming direct services.

The conclusions, based on the findings of this evaluation, lead to the following recommendations:

- Clearly define time requirements with principals so that other school business does not intrude on workshop time.

- If funds permit, add staff to provide more workshops with fewer participants so that sufficient time is available for discussion.

- A-AC speakers should insure that they are clearly understood.

- Investigate extending A-AC's role as a networking resource.